JUSTICE À LA TINA

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1

For Lucas Tirso do Nascimento, the silent, comforting certainty of rules was enough. The world, for him, unfolded like a grand chessboard where each piece had its prescribed move, each action generated a logical consequence, and beauty resided in the almost musical order of this system. From the age of eight, when his friends would choose him to referee their neighborhood soccer games, he had discovered his calling. He felt no urge to score a goal, nor had the passion to get involved in childish fights; his pleasure, almost ascetic, was to observe the facts from a distance, apply the norms with precision, and declare what was right. He judged; he did not play.

This nature shaped him, as slow water shapes a stone. In school, he never took sides in classroom disputes, nor did he run for student council, which seemed to him stages for vanities. He preferred the silent company of books, the immutable logic of grammar, the strict meaning of words. Law school was, therefore, less a choice and more an inevitable destiny. There, in the solemn environment of echoing corridors

and libraries that smelled of ancient knowledge, Lucas felt at home. His dream, the final piece on his personal chessboard, was one day to occupy a seat on the Supreme Tribunal of the Seven, the ST7, the pantheon where Justice, in its purest and most technical form, was practiced. He did not see politics; he saw procedure. He did not see power; he saw duty.

It was on one of these mornings, inside the classroom of Master Professor Eduardo P. Almeida, that the first dissonant vibration struck the harmony of his world. The topic of the debate was heated: the newly established “Fake News Inquiry” by the ST7. On one side of the room, a group of students defended the Court with a fervor Lucas found excessive, arguing that it was a drastic but necessary measure to protect the Democratic State of Law itself. On the other, a classmate with a deep, measured voice countered, citing articles and principles that Lucas knew by heart. “The Constitution designed a clear adversarial system,” the young man said, and each word seemed taken from a textbook. “The Public Prosecutor’s Office investigates and accuses; the Judiciary judges. When the court itself becomes the victim, investigator, and judge, we tear up the law in the name of saving it.”

Lucas listened to it all with his usual analytical attention, weighing the arguments on his internal scale. There was an almost mathematical truth to what the critical classmate was saying; it was the cold letter of the law he so admired. However, the classmate's logic, as precise as it was, clashed with something far more solid in Lucas’s mind: the image of the ST7 as an unshakeable pillar. It was a beacon of rationality immune to the human passions that clouded the rest

of the world. The institution simply would not make such a primary error. Surely there was a larger context, a technical justification that they, mere students, were not yet capable of understanding.

The discussion grew heated. Voices overlapped, until a student from the back of the room, a thin young man with an intense gaze named Allan, shouted, silencing the others: “This is all just an excuse! This inquiry only exists because of the report on the ‘Friend of a Friend of my Friend’ by the magazine Náufrago! They’re afraid the truth will come out!”

As was his custom, Master Eduardo intervened to steer the debate back to its proper course. With his usual professorial serenity, he calmed the spirits. “Both sides present valid points,” he said, adjusting the glasses on the bridge of his nose. “The law is made of tensions. Our function here is not to solve conspiracies, but to understand the legal arguments. One must ponder, analyze calmly, without passion.” For Lucas, the intervention was exemplary. The professor had restored order, focusing the discussion on legal technique and steering it away from what seemed to be a sensationalist rumor.

On his way home, Allan’s phrase echoed in Lucas’s mind. He stopped at Seu Joaquim’s newsstand, a habit he maintained as a small rebellion in a digital age. The smell of paper and ink comforted him; it was an aroma of permanence. “Seu Joaquim, by any chance do you have the latest issue of Náufrago?” Lucas asked, the words coming out almost on their own.

The old news vendor glanced from side to side, a quick, almost furtive gesture. “Son, I do. But I can’t sell it. An order came this morning, a court order, to recall the whole batch.” He bent down behind the counter and pulled out a copy, handing it to Lucas. “But you’re an old customer. Take this one. I’ll say I had already sold it before the order came.”

Lucas held the magazine. What was once a product on a shelf now felt heavy in his hands, not from the paper, but from the disobedience it represented. For a moment, he stood there in front of the stand, the copy in his hand, fighting a small internal battle. There was a court order, a clear rule. Taking that magazine was, in its essence, an act against the rules. And everything in Lucas was built on the foundation of respect for norms. But then, the logic he so cherished came to his aid, offering him a way out. He hadn’t bought it. It was a gift from Seu Joaquim, a good man he had known his whole life. A gift was not a commercial transaction, and friendship had its own rules, perhaps older and more important. With this thought to appease his conscience, he put the magazine in his backpack, thanked him with a nod, and quickened his pace toward home.

There, he locked himself in his room and, with his heart beating a little faster than usual, began to read. The report was long and meticulously detailed, a summary of a vast corruption investigation called “Operation Veja.” And, at the climax of the story, it showed how the investigation's tentacles, through an informant, were touching the robes of one of the ST7 ministers, the man known in the scheme by the codename “the Friend of a Friend of my Friend.”

He finished reading and stared at the wall, at the emptiness. A piece out of place. A rule that didn't fit. The establishment of an inquiry by the Court itself, immediately following a report that directly implicated it, seemed too crude a coincidence. But his mind, trained to trust the logic of institutions, soon sought an explanation. It was a reaction to protect the honor of the tribunal, a way of showing strength against those who slandered it.

Yes, that had to be it. The phrase repeated in his mind, but it sounded hollow. A subtle unease began to settle in his chest, the uncomfortable feeling that the ground beneath his feet, once so firm, now contained fine cracks. His certainties, the pillars of his world, suddenly seemed vulnerable. For a moment, doubt assailed him, cold and sharp. But Lucas repelled it with the force of a lifelong habit. No. The ST7 was right. It had to be. He chose to believe it. He folded the magazine with an almost abrupt gesture, as if to close the matter, and buried it at the bottom of a drawer, under stacks of notes that represented the order he so cherished. He returned to his books, seeking refuge in the clarity of the laws, and forced himself to think no more of it. But the fissure in his certainties, though minuscule, was there. And water, as is known, always finds a way.

2

He buried the doubt as one buries an unwanted seed, hoping that the darkness and the weight of routine would suffocate it. The days that followed were a refuge in what Lucas knew best: discipline. The final exams were approaching like a tide, and he let himself be carried away by them, finding comfort in the cold logic of an old case of *bis in idem*, in the predictable architecture of the codes, in the clarity of procedural deadlines. The world, within his books, made sense again. Each article was a brick, each paragraph, the mortar that held up the cathedral of his certainties.

His habit was to arrive at the university before almost everyone else, when the corridors were still silent and the smell of fresh coffee mixed with that of old paper. It was in these moments of quiet that he organized his thoughts. On one of these mornings, however, the quiet was broken by a voice he recognized immediately. It was Allan, the young man from the debate, speaking in a conspiratorial tone with a small group near the cafeteria. Lucas didn't want to listen, but the

words traveled through the still air and reached him. They were talking about a big protest.

“It’s on Saturday, the 8th,” Allan was saying, his voice filled with an urgency that Lucas found disconcerting. “We have to oust that corrupt president. It’s going to be at the Plaza of the Damned Agora, the whole country will stop to watch.”

Lucas merely registered the information, as he would a footnote. To him, it was just noise, the manifestation of the political passions he tried so hard to keep at a distance. Allan’s world, made of shouts and slogans, couldn’t be more different from his, built on silence and the letter of the law. He passed the group without being noticed and shut himself in the library, where the only voice that mattered was that of the legal scholars.

Sunday arrived sunny, a perfect day for the ritual of lunch at his parents’ house. The smell of sausage on the grill spread through the yard, an aroma of normality and comfort. As he tended to the barbecue with the methodical attention he devoted to everything, he overheard the conversation between his father, Geraldo, and his cousin, Zezão.

Zezão was a good man, with calloused hands and an easy smile, but on that day his forehead was furrowed with worry. He sold popcorn downtown, near the federal university, and his livelihood depended on the flow of people on the street. “Things are tough, man,” he said with a sigh. “With all the rain these past few weeks, the people have disappeared. Nobody stops to buy a little popcorn. The week was a disaster.”

Lucas listened, turning the sausages so they would cook evenly. His mind, trained to find patterns and solutions, connected the dots almost instantly. On one hand, Zezão's problem: a lack of customers. On the other, the information he had heard days earlier: an event that promised a huge crowd. Without any political intention, moved only by the practical desire to help his cousin, he turned around.

"Zezão, I heard at the university that there's going to be a big protest on Saturday, the 8th. At the Plaza of the Damned Agora. From what they said, a lot of people will be there."

Zezão's eyes lit up. The cloud of worry on his face dissipated, giving way to hope. "A protest, huh? Man, that's a great idea! Where there are people, there's hunger. Where there's hunger, popcorn sells!"

The conversation shifted. They talked about soccer, the weather, family trivialities. Lucas felt satisfied. He had applied his logic to a real-world problem and found a solution. He had helped his cousin. It was that simple. The chessboard, for a moment, seemed perfectly aligned. He had no idea, as the smell of smoke rose to the heavens on that peaceful Sunday, that the piece he had just moved, with the best of intentions, would begin a game he never dreamed of playing.

3

The Sunday ritual repeated, a safe harbor in the middle of the week. The smoke from the barbecue rose lazily, carrying the familiar smell of meat and charcoal, while the sound of cutlery and light conversation filled the house. The Saturday of the protest had passed without alarm for Lucas; for him, it had been just a day of study, a distant noise on the news. Now, in the comfort of family lunch, the world seemed to have returned to its axis. Everything was in its proper place.

It was then that the telephone rang, a shrill sound that cut through the harmony of the moment. His father answered it in the kitchen, and at first his voice was as usual. But soon the tone changed. The murmur turned into restrained, tense exclamations. “That’s not possible…” Lucas heard him say. “But what happened? My God.” A heavy silence followed, and when his father returned to the table, his face had the pallor of someone who had just received impossible news.

He looked at his wife, then at Lucas, and said the words that would make Lucas’s world tilt dangerously: “Zezão has been arrested.”

Lucas's mother brought a hand to her mouth. His younger sister stopped, her fork halfway to her lips. The air grew thick. Arrested? Zezão? The man who knew only work and an easy laugh? The questions came tumbling out, and his father's answer was a confused summary of what he could barely understand himself. It had to do with the protest on the 8th. After the demonstration, a group of people had gone to the justice building, and there had been vandalism.

Lunch ended there. The taste of the food vanished, replaced by the bitterness of anxiety. Lucas went with his father to the police station, a journey made in silence, each lost in his own thoughts. For Lucas, it was a constant hum in his mind: the memory of his suggestion, so logical and well-intentioned, now stained by an absurd consequence.

They found Zezão already being released, but the expression on his face was not of relief, but of deep confusion. He was free pending investigation, but under investigation for something that sounded like a bad joke: a coup d'état.

In the car on the way home, the story came out in pieces, in the simple voice of a man trying to understand what had happened to his life.

"I went, just like we talked about," Zezão recounted, looking at his own hands as if he didn't recognize them. "I sold popcorn like never before, kid. The people were so hungry… After the main crowd left, I packed up my stand and went home. Slept like a log. The next day, the police knock on my door."

He had been taken to the station, where he spent the day. The charge, they told him, was “attempted violent abolition of the democratic state of law,” a phrase so long and pompous it seemed to belong to another universe, not that of a popcorn vendor. It was all part of a new inquiry, opened on the 8th itself, the “Inquiry into Anti-Democratic Acts.” Zezão would need a lawyer and would have to give a statement in the coming days.

The silence in the car grew heavy, laden with the unsaid. It was Lucas who broke it, his voice thick with a cold feeling spreading through his chest. “I’m sorry, Zezão. It was my fault. I was the one who gave you the idea to go there.”

Zezão turned in his seat and, for the first time since they had seen him, managed a smile, albeit a weary one. “What are you talking about, kid? Don’t be silly. You’re not to blame for anything.” He looked out the window at the city passing by indifferently. “It’s just a big misunderstanding. It’ll all be cleared up by next week, you’ll see. They’ll see I was just there to sell my popcorn. Justice is justice, right?”

Lucas didn’t answer. He just nodded, as his cousin’s phrase echoed in his mind. “Justice is justice.” It was one of the pillars of his world. But, for the first time, upon hearing those words, he felt the ground beneath his feet tremble, almost imperceptibly.

4

It seemed as though Lucas's world had split in two. There was the outside world, where life went on as normal—classes, studies, Sunday lunches that now carried a silent tension. And there was the inside world, a labyrinth of anxiety where the image of Zezão, confused and frightened, repeated itself incessantly. That misunderstanding had lodged itself in Lucas's mind, a piece permanently out of place on his chessboard.

At the university, the air was different. The case of the 8th, once a distant affair, was now the center of every conversation. And with it, a new debate was scheduled in Master Eduardo's class. This time, the topic was even thornier: the "Inquiry into Anti-Democratic Acts" and a new line of investigation that had emerged, the "Inquiry into Digital Militias."

This time, Allan was not just a voice in the back of the room; he was at the center of the stage, one of the official debaters. And his posture was no longer that of a student making a provocation, but of someone who felt directly

attacked. He spoke with a contained fury, citing the case of a friend who had been arrested for criticizing the ST7 on his social media. His argument was a direct assault, without academic formalities. And then, at the climax of his speech, he pointed an accusatory finger at the air and his voice rose, echoing through the room.

"They talk about democracy, but the one acting like a dictator is Minister Réder Tina! He is the real coup plotter!"

A shocked silence fell over the class. Never had a minister of the ST7 been attacked with such contempt and in such a personal manner within those walls. The professor, Master Eduardo, intervened immediately, his usual calm tinged with a rare severity. He ended the debate, saying that criticism was valid, but that disrespect and personal attacks on an authority of the Supreme Court were unacceptable. "Despite any potential excesses," he said in his professorial tone, "we must trust in our institutions. Minister Réder Tina is a pillar of our justice and deserves respect."

Lucas, in his seat, felt a mixture of relief and agreement. Allan's aggressiveness bothered him. It was the chaos, the uncontrolled passion that he believed to be the opposite of justice. The professor's stance, on the other hand, reassured him. It was the voice of reason, of order.

That same evening, at home, his father brought the first good news in days. "I got a lawyer for Zezão," Geraldo said, relief evident in his voice. "An old friend, Marcos. He's good. He owed me a favor and is taking the case."

A wave of hope washed over Lucas. A lawyer. A professional. The rules of the game would be followed. He approached his father. “Dad, can I follow the case? Closely? As a student, I… I wanted to see how it works, see the other side.” What he didn’t say was that he wanted, needed, to see the system work to correct that absurd mistake. To see justice, in practice, being just.

His father agreed. He gave him Marcos’s contact information, and Lucas sent a message right away. To his surprise, the lawyer not only accepted but invited him to the first meeting with Zezão, the very next day.

The following day, after class, Lucas went straight to Marcos’s office. It was a commercial building downtown, and the office itself was small but organized. In the small waiting room, as he waited, his gaze was captured by a bronze statue on a marble pedestal. Justice. With her eyes blindfolded, holding the scales and the sword. He remembered his law history classes, the symbolism he had learned. The blindfold, so she could not see whom she judged, ensuring impartiality. The scales, to weigh the arguments of each side with precision. The sword, to enforce the decision. There, in that cold bronze, was the perfect representation of everything he believed in.

Marcos called him in. He was a middle-aged man, with a weary air but a firm handshake. Zezão was already there, looking even smaller in the leather chair. The meeting was reassuring. Marcos explained the process with the calm of someone who knows the way. The deposition was the first step.

“Zezão, it’s very simple,” Marcos said, leaning over the desk. “You are going to tell the truth. Just the truth. That you went there to sell popcorn, that you sold your popcorn, and that you went home. There is no crime in that. They have nothing against you. It’s just standard procedure for a big case like this. We’ll clarify the facts, and this will be dismissed in a few days.”

Lucas listened, absorbing every word. It was exactly as it should be. Logical. Methodical. Just. He left the office feeling the weight on his shoulders lessen. The misunderstanding would be cleared up. The piece would return to its proper place on the board. The blindfold on the eyes of the bronze statue, he thought, ensured that justice would not stray.

5

The tranquility, however, was a fragile state. Two days after the meeting at Marcos's office, Lucas's cell phone vibrated with an avalanche of messages from his university group chat. It was a news story, accompanied by a link to a major news portal. The headline was short and brutal: "University Student Arrested for Attacks on the ST7." The photo was unmistakable. It was Allan.

Lucas opened the article, his heart pounding. The report stated that the arrest had been ordered by Minister Réder Tina himself. The evidence? A recording of the classroom debate, made on a cell phone and sent anonymously to the court. In a video accompanying the news, Minister Tina himself gave a statement. With a severe expression, he asserted that Allan's criticisms constituted a crime against the honor of the institution and that, because the video was available online, it constituted a "permanent in flagrante delicto."

Lucas's head spun. In flagrante? A video? He mentally flipped through his criminal procedure textbooks. In flagrante

was the act of being caught committing the crime, or immediately after committing it. How could a video, a recording of a past event, be in flagrante? It was a distortion of logic, a rewriting of the rules in the middle of the game. It was like saying a video of a person who had already died made them legally still alive. The justification was not just fragile; it seemed absurd.

The next day, the classroom was a powder keg. The debate, of course, was about Allan's arrest. The passions, previously contained, exploded. On one side, students defended the measure as a necessary act of defending democracy. On the other, the group that was once a minority now spoke louder, denouncing the arrest as an act of censorship and tyranny.

Master Eduardo, once again, tried to be the beacon of moderation in the storm. "Calm down, everyone," he said, his voice trying to rise above the tumult. "This is a complex and unprecedented situation. We cannot jump to conclusions. The arrest seems strange to us, indeed, but we must trust that the ST7 has access to other facts that we, the public, do not yet know. Justice has its own mechanisms."

This time, the professor's words did not reassure Lucas. On the contrary. The blind faith in the institution, the presumption that there had to be a hidden and just reason, sounded hollow to him. It seemed less like wisdom and more like a refusal to see what was happening in front of everyone.

A few days later, the date of Zezão's deposition arrived. Lucas met with him and Marcos for a conversation after Zezão

had spoken with the authorities. The meeting was in the same small office, but the atmosphere was no longer one of optimism. Zezão was pale, his eyes sunken.

“It was weird, Dr. Marcos. It was weird, Lucas,” Zezão began, his voice low. “They didn’t want to know about my popcorn. They didn’t want to know where I was, what I saw.” He paused, trying to find the right words. “All the questions, one way or another, were about the same thing. ‘Did you want to carry out a coup?’, ‘Did you support the coup?’, ‘Who financed you to participate in the coup?’ I would say no, that I was just working, and they would ask the same question in a different way. It felt like they weren’t listening to me. They just wanted me to say ‘yes’.”

Marcos, who had been present at the deposition, confirmed with a slow nod, his expression grim. “It’s true, Lucas. It was a targeted interrogation. They weren’t investigating; they were trying to extract a confession for a crime they had already decided he committed.”

A chill ran down Lucas’s spine. This was not a procedure to uncover the truth. It was a theater. A ritual designed to confirm a pre-written narrative. The misunderstanding was not being cleared up; it was being cemented, transformed into fact through a flawed process.

That night, Lucas couldn’t study. The books, his refuges of logic and order, seemed useless. He opened his computer and began to research. Not his law manuals, but the news, the videos, the online discussions. He wanted to understand what was happening beyond the walls of the

university and the courts. He found dozens of videos. He saw an opposition deputy, on the floor of the chamber, denouncing the inquiry as a legal aberration, an instrument of political persecution. He saw jurists pointing out the same illegalities he himself had noticed.

And then, he came across a video that made him stop. A parliamentarian named Daniel, a man with an aggressive way of speaking and wide gestures, was delivering a virulent speech. He didn't just criticize; he attacked. He called the ministers of the ST7 by name, accused them of being the real dictators, of carrying out a coup d'état in the country. He said someone needed to take "forceful actions" against the court. The words were heavy, incendiary. They were, in a way, the extreme and amplified version of Allan's criticisms.

Lucas felt uncomfortable listening to it. The form was wrong, aggressive. But the content… the content echoed the doubts that were beginning to corrode his own certainties. He closed the computer around two in the morning, his head throbbing. The world was no longer a chessboard with clear rules. It seemed more like a muddy battlefield, where the rules were rewritten at every moment, and justice, his guiding star, seemed to be losing its shine. The fissure in the wall of his convictions was no longer a thin line. It was a widening crack, and he feared what he might find on the other side.

6

It was no longer the same world. Yesterday, justice was an ideal, the rules seemed solid. Today, however, reality imposed itself with the crudeness of broken glass. The sound of the television on in the living room, normally a constant background noise in his house in the mornings, on that day, cut through the air with the words of the news anchor.

"…arrested at his residence early this morning. Parliamentarian Daniel was taken by the police on charges of crimes against the Democratic State of Law. In a statement, Minister Réder Tina affirmed that the arrest was made in permanent in flagrante delicto, as it was a non-bailable crime, and that the threats made in the video continued to produce their effects as long as they were available online."

Lucas stood frozen in the hallway, his coffee cup in hand. The same justification. The same twisted logic. The same rewriting of the law to serve a purpose. It was no longer an anomaly, an isolated and strange case like Allan's. It was a method. A pattern. The law, which for Lucas was a fortress of certainties, was being dismantled, brick by brick, and used as

a throwing weapon. The aggressiveness of Daniel's speech was condemnable, Lucas knew, but the system's response was frightening. It seemed disproportionate, surgical, as if the objective was not to punish a crime, but to silence a voice.

The phone rang, pulling him from his thoughts. It was Marcos. The lawyer's voice, normally calm and measured, was laden with a dark urgency.

"Lucas. They took Zezão."

The cup trembled in Lucas's hand. "Took him how? What happened?"

"Preventive detention," Marcos said, the words coming out like a bitter spit. "They went to his house early in the morning. The official justification is the usual one: the gravity of the accusation and the risk of him destroying evidence." The lawyer paused, and Lucas could hear his heavy breathing on the other end of the line. "Destroying evidence, Lucas. What evidence? Popcorn receipts? The recipe for seasoned butter? It's a mockery."

A knot formed in Lucas's throat. The guilt, which was once a spark, was now a flame. His innocent suggestion, his desire to help, had placed his cousin at the center of a monstrous machine that he was only beginning to comprehend.

That same afternoon, they went to visit Zezão in prison. The cold air and the smell of disinfectant in the place were the opposite of Marcos's cozy office. Behind a thick glass, Zezão

seemed smaller, shrunken. His eyes, once worried, now carried a deep fear.

“Doctor, Lucas… something strange happened,” Zezão said, his voice low, almost a whisper through the intercom. “They had another deposition. In here.”

Marcos frowned. “I wasn’t notified of any deposition.”

“It was without a lawyer,” Zezão continued, swallowing hard. “They said it was just to sign the minutes of the first deposition, that it had been missed. They gave me some papers to sign. There were a lot of difficult words, ‘legalese’ as you call it. I didn’t understand anything, but it didn’t seem like what I had said. They kept rushing me, telling me to sign quickly, that they didn’t have all day.”

Lucas looked at Marcos, whose face had transformed into a mask of contained fury.

“Did you sign, Zezão?” the lawyer asked, his voice dangerously calm.

“No. I told them I wouldn’t sign anything without you. They got angry, but I didn’t sign. In the end, they made me sign a little paper saying I refused to confirm the minutes. Was that the right thing to do, doctor?”

“It was the only right thing that has happened in this whole process, Zezão,” Marcos replied, running a hand over his face. “Stay strong. We’re going to get you out of here.”

The conversation ended soon after. On the way back, the silence in the car was heavy. Lucas watched the city pass by the window, but he didn't see it. His mind was trapped in that cold room.

It was Marcos who broke the silence, slamming his fist on the steering wheel. "They are fabricating a culprit, Lucas. Fabricating! It's no longer about proving a crime. It's about building a narrative." He looked at Lucas, his eyes flashing. "They took dozens of people, people who were just there, like Zezão, and are throwing them all in the same bag as the vandals. There is no individualization of conduct. It doesn't matter what each one did. If you were there, you are guilty of the whole thing. It's the theory of the crime of the multitude, an aberration that wouldn't hold up in any serious court!"

Lucas remained silent. The statue of Justice he so admired in his mind, the blindfolded and impartial goddess, seemed to have changed. Now, he imagined her tearing off her own blindfold, not to see better, but to choose her target by hand. And the scales in her hand did not weigh facts, but conveniences. The sword was not to execute a just sentence, but to cut off anyone who stood in her way. The crack in his convictions was no longer a crack. It was an abyss. And he was standing on the edge, looking into the darkness.

7

Months dragged on with the slowness of a chronic illness, eroding hope. Zezão remained in prison, and with each visit, Lucas saw him a little more diminished. The easy smile had been replaced by a permanent furrow of worry on his forehead. He had lost weight, his skin pale under the cold light of the visiting room. He complained that the medicine for his blood pressure sometimes didn't arrive, that some days food was scarce, that fear kept him from sleeping. Each complaint was a stab in Lucas's chest, a constant reminder of his innocent suggestion that had turned into a sentence.

Marcos worked tirelessly. Petitions, appeals, habeas corpus requests. Each document was a work of legal technique, well-founded, precise. And each one of them hit a wall of indifference. The court's responses, when they came, were short, standardized dispatches that denied the requests without analyzing the merits, citing the "guarantee of public order" and the "gravity of the crimes under investigation." The law, for Marcos and Lucas, was an instrument of logic. for the ST7, it seemed to be merely a formality to be fulfilled.

Finally, the trial was scheduled. It would take place in a virtual session, a modernity that, in that context, sounded sinister. Days before, the final blow to the already staggering defense came: Marcos was notified that he would not have access to the alleged evidence the prosecution claimed to have—the videos and intelligence reports that, according to them, connected Zezão to the “coup-plotting nucleus.” The justification was that the material was confidential and contained “information sensitive to state security.”

“How do you defend against an accusation you cannot see?” Marcos asked, rhetorically, the night before the trial. He and Lucas were in the office, surrounded by piles of paper that now seemed useless. “It’s a complete inversion. The burden of proof is on the prosecution, but they throw us in the dark and ask us to prove the innocence of a ghost.”

The day of the trial was a theater of the absurd. On a computer screen, Zezão appeared, small and lost, in a gray room of the penitentiary. The faces of the ministers, in their digital windows, seemed distant, unreachable. Marcos made a brilliant, passionate defense. He spoke of Zezão’s life, his honest work, the impossibility of a popcorn vendor attempting to stage a coup d’état. He pointed out the lack of individualization of conduct, the absence of evidence, the attempt to create a culprit by association.

When he finished, Minister Tina, presiding over the session, barely moved a muscle. His vote, that of the rapporteur, was already prepared. He read the text with the pomp of an emperor reading a decree, his voice laden with an authority he seemed to believe was unquestionable,

describing Zezão as part of an “evil machine” aimed at destroying the institutions. The other ministers followed his vote, some reading equally vague justifications, others uttering a quick “I concur with the rapporteur,” without adding a single word of their own reasoning.

The sentence came like a hammer blow in the silence of the office: fourteen years of imprisonment. Seven for “violent abolition of the Democratic State of Law” and another seven for “attempted coup d’état.” Marcos tried to intervene, shouting that it was *bis in idem*, a double punishment for the same act, something any law freshman would know was illegal. But his microphone was summarily muted, and the session, closed. The screen went black.

Marcos stood still, staring at the dark monitor for a long moment. The silence was dense, heavy. Then, with a force Lucas hadn’t imagined he possessed, he punched the wall next to the bookshelf. The dry sound echoed through the room. He turned and, without a word to Lucas, left the room. Lucas followed him, hesitantly, to the corridor, where Marcos stopped in front of the bronze statue Lucas had seen on his first visit. The goddess of Justice, with her eyes blindfolded.

“They did it,” he whispered, his voice hoarse with disbelief and anger. His gaze fixed on the statue, on the cold bronze. “You know, Lucas… my whole life I admired this image. Justice is blind so as not to see sides, to judge only the facts.” He looked at Lucas, his eyes filled with a pain that went beyond the lost case. “But I was wrong. The blindfold is no longer on the eyes of Justice.” His gaze returned to the blindfolded face of the bronze goddess. “She took off the

blindfold and put it on the defense. It is we who are blind now, Lucas. A blind defense and a justice that sees very well which side to look at."

Marcos's words hung in the air, crystallizing the truth Lucas had refused to accept. The entire structure had crumbled. There was no more logic, no more rules. There was only power.

That night, the TV reported another "act of courage" by Minister Tina. A citizen had allegedly verbally attacked him at an airport and was arrested in the act for contempt. The official narrative was clear: the minister, a defender of order, was the victim of an aggressor. But, hours later, cell phone videos from other passengers began to leak on social media. The images showed the opposite: the citizen making a harsh criticism of the minister, who lost control. The minister's son went after the man, and Tina ordered the police to arrest the citizen. Reality and the official truth were two different planets.

Lucas turned off the TV. The abyss that had once frightened him now seemed familiar. The fear, the anguish, the guilt… all of it was merging into something new. A cold ember of anger. He, who had his whole life only observed the game, who prided himself on being the impartial judge, felt that the board had been overturned. And, if there were no more rules, he realized that now he would have to learn to play with dice.

8

Impartiality was a distant memory, a faded photograph of a time that no longer existed. The ember of anger in Lucas's chest had not been extinguished by sleep; on the contrary, the morning found it more alive, a source of cold, focused energy. He, who had spent his whole life observing, analyzing, judging without getting involved, now felt an urgency to act. Neutrality was no longer a virtue; it was complicity.

It was with this new feeling that he sought out Marcos. He found the lawyer in his office, no longer exploding in fury, but immersed in a calm that seemed even more dangerous. The stacks of case files were still on the desk, but Marcos's gaze was not on them; it was fixed on a distant point, like a general surveying an impossible battlefield.

"We can no longer fight on their terms, Lucas," Marcos said, before Lucas could even speak. "The board is rigged. Every piece we move, they capture with a move they invent on the spot. The law, here, is over. Now it's politics."

"So what do we do?" Lucas asked, his voice firm.

Marcos opened a drawer and took out a business card. “We find other players. There’s a congresswoman, Clara Valença. She has been one of the few voices in Congress to openly denounce what the ST7 is doing. I’m going to call her. Zezão’s case… it’s the perfect example, the human proof of the aberration they’ve created. We need to show this to someone who still has some power to fight.”

Two days later, they were in a room adjacent to the congressional floor. The air was thick with hurried conversations and the smell of reheated coffee. Clara Valença received them without formalities. She was a middle-aged woman, with a weary look, but one that still held a spark of defiance.

Marcos laid out Zezão’s case, methodically, listing the violations, the lack of evidence, the absurd sentence. Clara listened, nodding her head slowly. None of it was new to her.

“Mr. Marcos, I have received many stories like this recently,” she said with a sigh. “Mothers, wives, children… all of people who have been ensnared by these inquiries. The ST7 has created a state of exception within the State of Law. And they know that legally they are shielded, because they themselves are the final instance.”

“So there’s nothing to be done?” Lucas’s voice came out sharper than he intended.

Clara Valença looked at him, noticing his presence more attentively for the first time. “Legally, on their field, perhaps not. But politically, yes.” She leaned forward. “We are

articulating an amnesty project. It's the only way out. A political solution to a problem that has become political. To pardon the crimes imputed to these prisoners, who should never have been imprisoned in the first place. To give them back the lives that were stolen from them."

Amnesty. The word sounded strange to Lucas. In his books, amnesty was for moments of transition, for great national pacifications. To use it now meant admitting they were at war.

"We need cases like your cousin's," the congresswoman continued, now looking directly at Lucas. "We need stories that the public can understand. 'Abolition of the State of Law' is abstract. A popcorn vendor sentenced to fourteen years in prison for working… that, people understand. That shows the cruelty, the disproportionality."

At that moment, something clicked in Lucas. He saw himself, for the first time, not as a law student, but as someone who possessed a weapon. His knowledge, his ability to dissect the perverse logic used by the court, was useful.

"They used the theory of the crime of the multitude to avoid individualization of conduct," Lucas said, and the words came out clear, precise. "They condemned Zezão for *bis in idem*, applying two penalties for the same act. They used the concept of permanent in flagrante to arrest parliamentarians for videos, which is a doctrinal aberration. Every step they took was a violation of a basic principle of criminal law."

Clara Valença and Marcos looked at him, surprised. Lucas was no longer the frightened boy. He was someone who dissected the enemy with the coldness of a surgeon.

The congresswoman smiled, a minimal, tired, but genuine smile. “We need people like you, kid. People who understand their language and know how to translate tyranny for the people.”

Lucas left that meeting transformed. The chessboard he saw in his mind had not disappeared. It had merely changed shape. It was no longer a game of fixed rules to be observed, but a strategic battlefield. And he, who had always refused to be a piece, now understood his role. He would not be a pawn, nor a king. He would be the hand that points out the opponent’s illegal moves, that narrates for all the cheating that is happening in plain daylight. Justice might be blind, but he refused to be mute. And, together with Marcos and Clara, they would do everything to save not only Zezão, but all the others who had been unjustly imprisoned.

9

Yin-yang. The balance between light and darkness, order and chaos. Lucas used to believe that the law was the precise line that separated them, the wall that contained barbarism. Now, he saw that the line had been erased. The darkness was no longer on the other side of the wall; it had torn it down and was bleeding over the light, staining everything with the color of indifference. And the most frightening thing was to realize that it was not the barbarians who had brought down the wall, but the guardians themselves: justice, the ST7.

His life had become a feverish routine. Mornings were with Marcos, analyzing other cases, finding the same patterns of abuse, the same prefabricated sentences. Afternoons were with Congresswoman Clara Valença, helping her team to catalog the cases, to draft the arguments for the Amnesty project. Lucas slept little, ate poorly. Guilt and anger were his fuel. Every page he read, every story he heard, was a new Zezão, a new life crushed by the same machine.

It was on one of these mornings, while organizing a folder with testimonies from prisoners' families, that the phone on his desk vibrated. It was Marcos. Lucas answered, expecting another instruction, another case. But on the other end of the line, the silence stretched a second longer than normal.

"Lucas…" The lawyer's voice was different. It had lost its combative tone. It was hollow, broken. "I need to tell you something. I don't even know how to say this."

Lucas's stomach tightened.

"It's Zezão," Marcos continued, and Lucas could hear that he was crying. "He's dead, Lucas. Zezão is dead."

The words didn't make sense at first. They were just sounds. Dead? How? Lucas's mind, always so quick, refused to process it.

"It was in prison," Marcos's voice was a whisper of pain. "His blood pressure… the medicine we fought so hard for him to get… they didn't give it in time. The medical assistance we requested dozens of times… They didn't kill him with a bullet, Lucas. They let him die. It's cleaner. More bureaucratic."

Lucas hung up the phone. The world around him lost its sound, its color. The folder in his hands fell to the floor, scattering the papers, the stories of other Zezãos. He could only think of one thing: "There's going to be a protest, Zezão. A lot of people will be there." His own voice, on that sunny Sunday lunch. The sentence that condemned him.

The next day, he went to the university. He didn't know why. Maybe out of habit, maybe because he didn't know where else to go. The buzz of conversations in the corridors was about it. Zezão's death was the news of the day, not in the traditional newspapers, which ignored the case, but on the internet. As he entered the classroom, he saw that the debate had already begun.

"It's a tragedy, no doubt," one student was saying. "But we can't forget he was imprisoned for a very serious crime against the nation."

"He didn't receive the medical care the defense had been requesting for months!" a girl retorted.

The discussion grew heated, until Master Eduardo's voice imposed itself, with his exasperating calm. "People, please. It's a regrettable situation. A fatality that saddens us all." He adjusted his glasses, his face a mask of neutrality. "But we cannot allow the emotion of the moment to make us forget the bigger picture. Justice, despite its occasional excesses, is the pillar that upholds order. I am certain that the circumstances of the death will be investigated, and that the system is being fair to maintain our democracy."

It was the last straw. The professor's neutrality, which Lucas had once admired, now seemed obscene to him. A cowardice disguised as wisdom.

And, for the first time in his life, Lucas, the best student in the class, the silent observer, could not contain himself. He stood up. The entire room fell silent, surprised.

“It’s not possible,” Lucas said, his voice low but sharp, vibrating with an intensity no one there had ever heard. “It’s not possible that you won’t take a stand in this case. Everything about it is wrong. It wasn’t a ‘fatality’. They let him die in an almost sadistic way. I’ve never seen anything like it.” He looked directly at the professor, who stared back, shocked. “You can’t save democracy through anti-democratic and authoritarian means.”

“But they are accused of a coup, Lucas,” the professor stammered. “It’s an abnormal situation…”

“If democracy needs a dictator to save it,” Lucas interrupted him, his voice now resonating through the room, “then it was never a real democracy, just a theater. The frog of democracy isn’t vaporized, it dies when you turn on the stove, slowly and gradually. It dies because people like you, academics, pretend not to see anything so as not to lose your own status. It dies because the press, which should be scandalized, makes power calculations, thinking that if everything goes wrong, an editorial asking for forgiveness later will suffice.”

He grabbed his backpack and left the room, without looking back. He heard the beginning of a timid applause, quickly muffled by the chaos of voices that erupted after his departure.

That night, the television seemed like a portal to hell. A debate show had “experts on coups d’état” commenting on Zezão’s death. One of them, with a sneer, looked at the camera and said, “The family complains about the sentence,

but at least now he doesn't have to serve it anymore." The other added, laughing, "They'll have to find a way for him to serve the rest of the sentence even though he's dead." And the host laughed along.

Lucas felt a deep nausea. It was no longer about law, about politics. It was about the complete loss of humanity. He turned off the TV and sat in the dark. The pain and the guilt were still there, but now, there was something more. A cold resolution, hard as diamond. The seed of doubt had died.

10

It was the end of mourning and the beginning of war. The pain over Zezão's death had not disappeared, but had crystallized into something hard and sharp within Lucas. He, who had always hidden behind logic and observation, realized that the only answer to the absence of rules was to create his own. His weapon would not be violence, but clarity. His ammunition, the very words of the law, now used to expose the farce.

He started recording videos. Sitting in his room, with a pile of books in the background, he spoke to his cell phone camera with the same precision he once used in mock trials. He translated the "legalese" into language anyone could understand. "This is *bis in idem*," he said in a video showing Zezão's sentence. "It's like being fined twice for the same speeding ticket. It's illegal. It's an aberration." In another, he explained: "This is what they call the 'crime of the multitude.' It's a way of saying that if you're at a party where someone breaks a glass, all the guests are guilty. Our law says that the

penalty cannot pass from the person of the convicted. They have torn that up."

The videos, raw and direct, began to gain traction. Shared in groups, then by independent journalists, they spread. Lucas was no longer an anonymous student; he was a voice, a translator of tyranny.

Meanwhile, in Congress, Congresswoman Clara Valença was fighting her own battle. The Amnesty project advanced at a snail's pace, with a new obstacle every day. Deputies who supported the cause were suddenly targeted by ST7 investigations for absurd reasons, old and forgotten accusations that resurfaced like convenient ghosts. The message was clear: supporting the Amnesty was picking a direct fight with the court.

But public pressure, fueled by voices like Lucas's, was growing. Zezão's death had become a symbol. On a day of maximum tension, after the resignation of the Speaker of the House, Humberto Usmota, who could not withstand the pressure, the Amnesty was finally put to a vote and, in a tight and historic vote, approved. For a brief moment, a window of light seemed to open in the darkness.

The light lasted less than twenty-four hours.

The next morning, the country woke up to a decree from Minister Réder Tina. In a unilateral decision, he declared the Amnesty unconstitutional. But he didn't stop there. Accusing Congress of collusion with "coup-plotting forces," he ordered the temporary closure of the Chamber and revoked

the mandates of the main deputies who had voted in favor of the project. The President of the Republic, Castro Silva, a friend of Tina's, went on TV shortly after to appoint interveners for the vacant positions. The press, for the most part, reported the act not as a coup, but as an "energetic measure in defense of the Constitution."

At the university, Master Eduardo, with an impassive face, told the class: "It is an exceptional situation, which requires exceptional measures. The harmony between the powers is important, but the defense of democracy comes first."

That night, Lucas recorded his last video. He was no longer calm. There was fire in his eyes. "They did it," he said, his voice thick with anger. "They finally took off their masks. This is not the defense of democracy. This is dictatorship itself. The name for this is a coup. And the coup did not come from the protesters, it came from the highest seat of Justice."

The video exploded. Millions of views in a few hours. Lucas had become public enemy number one.

The response came two days later, at dawn. Loud knocks on the door. Armed police officers, with vests and helmets, invaded the house. They took everything: his computer, his books, his cell phone. Lucas was handcuffed in front of his stunned parents.

But the story the TV told that night was different. In a press conference, the police announced "Operation Labyrinth," a mega-operation that had dismantled the financial arm of the

criminal faction PTC, responsible for laundering drug trafficking money through gas stations. And there, amidst photos of criminals and seized weapons, was Lucas's face. A complex organizational chart, full of arrows and names he had never seen, linked him to one of the faction's leaders.

He was not a political dissident. He was a criminal. A money launderer for organized crime. The narrative was perfect. Who would defend such a monster?

The trial lasted thirty days. It was a televised farce. They didn't talk about his videos, they didn't talk about a coup, they didn't talk about the ST7. They talked about fake spreadsheets, about foreign accounts, about a web of crimes he had no idea how it worked. The "evidence" was confidential. The defense had access to almost nothing.

The sentence was read by Tina himself, who had taken over the case: one hundred and thirty-six years in prison. The age of the Republic. A sadistic joke.

Upon arriving at the prison, the shock of the sentence still etched on his face, Lucas was thrown into a cell he would share with an older man with a resigned look.

"I think we're going to be spending a lot of time together," the man said with a half-smile. "Why?" Lucas asked. "I'll be here for about six more years. I ran over and killed a politician's son. And you, kid? How much time did you get?"

Lucas looked at his hands, at the scars beginning to form on his knuckles. "One hundred and thirty-six years," he replied.

The other prisoner's face fell. There was fear in his eyes. He hesitated, but curiosity got the better of him. "My God. What did you do to get so much time?"

Lucas looked up, recalling the past few months.

"I took off the blindfold. I saw the eyes of justice."

11

Hangover. It was the only word to describe the state of the nation. The arrest of Lucas, the masterstroke that was supposed to end the matter by turning a dissident into a criminal, had had the opposite effect. The hand had been too heavy. The farce, too crude. Instead of consolidating the image of a strong judiciary fighting crime, “Operation Labyrinth” exposed the arbitrariness so clearly that even the most skeptical began to doubt. Public opinion, previously apathetic, now simmered with distrust.

Minister Tina, a master strategist, realized that he had stretched the rope to its breaking point. Brute force needed to give way to cunning. To maintain power, it was necessary to retreat and give the people back the illusion of normality.

And so, the grand theater of reconciliation began. The National Congress, temporarily closed, was reopened with pomp and circumstance. The Speaker of the House, Humberto Usmota, who had resigned, was reinstated in a backroom deal, hailed by the press as a “gesture of democratic maturity.”

And, as the main act, a new vote on the Amnesty project was scheduled.

This time, the result was different. Approved by a large majority, the law was quickly sanctioned. The prison gates opened. Dozens of men and women, the “vandals” of the 8th, returned to their families, thin, tired, but free. The country breathed a sigh of relief. Democracy, the newspapers said, had found its way back.

But the devil, as always, was in the details. The Amnesty that freed the anonymous carried in its text surgical clauses. The politicians who had been investigated, like parliamentarian Daniel, had their mandates revoked and their political rights suspended for eight years. They were forbidden to run for office, to speak on social media, to exist politically. The law pardoned them of the “crimes,” but banished them from public life.

It was Congresswoman Clara Valença who translated the maneuver for the country. One night, from her office, she recorded a simple, direct video that spread like wildfire.

“Do not be fooled,” she said, looking firmly at the camera. “This is not a return to normality. It is the sophistication of tyranny. They released the pawns to maintain the narrative that the targets were always the kings. They freed the common people to calm the public, while ensuring that their political adversaries were neutralized, silenced, and forever branded as the ‘real criminals.’ They did not lose the war; they merely sacrificed a troop to protect the castle.”

The video was an earthquake. The clarity of Clara's analysis exposed the hypocrisy of the deal. The system's response was immediate and predictable. Pro-government parties filed a complaint against the congresswoman with the Ethics Council. And, as if by magic, an old and forgotten investigation into an alleged corruption scheme in the municipality of her hometown was reopened and leaked to the press.

The headlines were scandalous. TV shows debated the "gravity of the case." Political commentators, the same ones who had applauded the "reconciliation," now feigned shock. "It is inadmissible," said one of them, his brow furrowed in false indignation. "A member of congress cannot be involved in such a major corruption scandal and still remain at large. Her mandate must be revoked to set an example."

The net was closing around Clara Valença, the next piece to be removed from the board.

And Lucas?

Lucas remained in prison. His conviction was not for “anti-democratic acts.” The Amnesty did not apply to him. He was, for all legal purposes, a money launderer, a member of the PTC faction. His story, so central to the beginning of the crisis, had been conveniently isolated, encapsulated in a criminal narrative from which there was no political escape. Isolated from the outside world, he made the small prison library his new universe. The law books, once his companions, now seemed empty to him, mere manuals for a game whose rules had been revoked.

His interest turned to the fundamentals, to the questions that came before the law. He delved into philosophy, seeking in Socrates, Plato, and especially Aristotle, books that students at the university only encountered through summaries of summaries, which now, in their entirety, became an answer to the collapse he had witnessed. He read about tyranny, about demagoguery, about how republics die.

One day, a guard brought him a more modern book, with a dark cover, and Lucas smiled bitterly as he read the title, which seemed to summarize his journey: *Democracy, the God that Failed*. He was the necessary collateral damage, the sacrifice that allowed the game to continue.

Afterword

The Roots of Reality in "Justice à la Tina"

"Justice à la Tina" is a work of fiction. Characters, events, and dialogues were created to serve a narrative. However, fiction rarely arises from a vacuum. It breathes the air of its time and feeds on the facts that shape society. This story, in particular, is a mirror, sometimes terribly faithful, of a complex and turbulent period in Brazil's recent history.

This afterword serves as a reading key, a guide to connect the elements of Lucas Tirso do Nascimento’s journey with the reality that inspired it.

Central Institutions and Characters

The ST7 (Supreme Tribunal of the Seven) and Minister Réder Tina: The most direct of the allegories. The ST7 is the Brazilian **Supreme Federal Court (STF)**. The figure of **Réder Tina** is the fictional representation of **Minister Alexandre de Moraes**. The narrative sought to capture not only his actions but also the public perception of his figure: a firm-handed judge who took upon himself the mission of "defender of democracy," but whose methods are clearly excessive and greatly violate legal principles.

Zezão, the Popcorn Vendor: Zezão is not a person, but a symbol. He represents the hundreds of **common citizens**, with no history of political activism, who were arrested during the events of January 8, 2023, in Brasília, including **street vendors**, such as those selling popcorn and ice cream, who were at the location for work and were arrested amidst the chaos. Zezão's death in prison due to lack of medical care is a direct and painful reference to the death of **Cleriston Pereira da Cunha ("Clezão")**, a defendant from the January 8th events who died in the Papuda penitentiary in November 2023. His defense had already warned about his precarious health condition and requested his release, which was ignored.

Parliamentarian Daniel and Student Allan: These characters are inspired by two real figures who became notorious targets of the inquiries led by Moraes. **Daniel** is an allusion to former federal deputy **Daniel Silveira**. **Allan** represents the blogger **Allan dos Santos**.

Congresswoman Clara Valença and Humberto Usmota: Clara represents the **opposition parliamentarians** who, in the National Congress, tried to create political solutions to the crisis, primarily through the proposal of an **Amnesty**. The figure of Usmota, who in the book resigns from the presidency of the Chamber, is a reference to politicians like **Hugo Motta**, central figures in the articulations and blockades of the Amnesty agenda in Congress.

Legal Events and Concepts: Anatomy of the Crisis

The plot of "Justice à la Tina" was woven with threads of real events and legal theses that marked the period.

The Genesis – The "Fake News" Inquiry (INQ 4781): The starting point of the crisis, in the book and in reality. Established *ex officio* (on its own initiative) by the STF in 2019, its legality was contested from the beginning for violating the adversarial system, where the Judiciary judges but does not investigate or accuse. The decision to validate it in the STF plenary was made by a vote of 10 to 1, with the dissenting vote of Minister Marco Aurélio Mello warning of the dangers of the precedent being set. This inquiry was the backdrop for the **censorship of the Crusoé Magazine report** on "the friend of my father's friend," which linked Operation Car Wash to a court minister, and inaugurated the idea that **criticizing the court could be treated as a crime**.

The Metamorphosis of the Inquiries: The narrative shows the investigation perpetuating itself. This reflects what

happened with **Inquiry 4828 (into Anti-Democratic Acts)**. When the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP), the holder of the criminal action, requested its closure, Minister Alexandre de Moraes granted the request but, in the same act, initiated a new inquiry *ex officio*, **4874 (into Digital Militias)**, to which he transferred all the material from the previous one, keeping the investigation under his control and bypassing the MP's prerogative.

Controversial Legal Theses: Lucas's story is permeated by decisions based on innovative and widely questioned legal interpretations:

- **In Flagrante by Video:** The arrest of parliamentarian Daniel in the book is based on the thesis of **"permanent in flagrante delicto"** for a video published online. This notion, that a crime of opinion continues to occur as long as the video is online, was used in the real case of Daniel Silveira and represents a distortion of the concept of in flagrante.
- **Flexibilization of Parliamentary Immunity:** The same arrest relativized parliamentary immunity, allowing the non-bailable detention of a deputy for a crime of opinion.
- **Arrests for "Criticism":** The cases of Allan, Daniel, and the citizen at the airport (based on a real incident involving Minister Moraes in Rome) illustrate how criticism, even if harsh, came to be framed as a crime, justifying preventive detentions and other coercive measures.

The Trial of January 8th – The Apex of Exceptions: The trial of Zezão and the other protesters in the book mirrors the main criticisms made of the January 8th proceedings:

- **STF as a First Instance Court:** By taking over the cases, the STF acted as a court of first instance for hundreds of defendants without special jurisdiction, suppressing their right to a dual-degree of jurisdiction (the right to appeal to a higher court).
- **Generic Accusations:** The charges were based on the theory of the **"crime of the multitude,"** without proper **individualization of conduct**, treating everyone present as guilty of the whole.
- ***Bis in Idem***:** Many defendants were convicted of both "violent abolition of the Democratic State of Law" and "coup d'état" for the same acts, constituting a **double punishment for the same act**.
- **Disproportionate Sentences:** The sentences were considered by many as excessive, such as the real sentence of **17 years for a man who sat in the minister's chair**.

The Final Paradox: The motto that guides the actions of the ST7 in the book is that of **"destroying democracy to defend it."** This phrase encapsulates the central paradox of the period: the use of exceptional measures, which violate individual guarantees and due process of law, in the name of protecting the Democratic State of Law itself.

"Operation Labyrinth" and Lawfare: The final twist, in which Lucas is arrested for a false connection to a criminal faction, reflects the tactic of **"lawfare"**: the use of legal procedures as

a weapon to persecute and discredit an opponent. By turning him into a common criminal, the state isolates him from popular support and makes his cause indefensible, demonstrating how what appears to be the end of a crisis is merely a theater to maintain a facade of normality while the persecution continues by other means.

Conclusion: An Ongoing Epilogue

At the time this book is released, the story that inspired it has not come to an end. Many of the real-life "Zezãos," the ordinary citizens, continue to serve their long sentences, forgotten by most of the public and the press. Others, although free, live under the weight of precautionary measures, such as the use of ankle monitors, and struggle to rebuild lives shattered by dragging legal processes.

The political targets, the "Daniels" and the "Claras," continue to be neutralized. Their political rights have been revoked or are under constant threat, and "lawfare" hangs like a sword over their heads, ready to be used at any new attempt at opposition. The communicators and journalists, the "Allans," remain mostly in exile or under silencing orders, in a constant battle against the blocking of their networks and the stifling of their voices.

This scenario of persecution is only sustained by a complicit silence from three pillars of society, as portrayed in the work. The first is that of the **mainstream Media**, which, out of calculation or convenience, often chose to report the

“official” version of events, ignoring rights violations and treating the crisis as a mere political conflict, rather than an attack on fundamental freedoms. The second is that of the **intellectual and academic elite**, represented in the figure of **Master Eduardo**, who, in the name of a supposed neutrality, refuses to name the abuses, preferring the security of his position to the duty of defending the truth. Finally, the pillar of the **pragmatic politicians**, the "Humberto Usmotas," who, focused solely on their power games and the maintenance of their positions, make the necessary deals for the system to continue functioning, even if it means sacrificing justice and freedom on the altar of governance.

What is being lived is not peace, but the appearance of it. The acute phase of the crisis may have passed, but the exceptional structures created remain intact, ready to be reactivated. Lucas's story, therefore, does not end in the final chapter; it continues, silently, in the lives of hundreds of real people. It is a cautionary tale about the fragility of democracy and a universal question that remains unanswered: what happens when the institutions created to protect freedom become the greatest threat to it? The answer is being written, not in the pages of a book, but in the daily reality of a country still searching for a way back to a justice that once again wears its blindfold.

Author's Note

This story was not written to be a property, but a record. Its sole purpose is to serve as a chronicle of the dark times in which we live, a witness in words so that memory will not be erased.

For this reason, this work is released into the public domain. I renounce all copyrights in perpetuity. Feel free to share it, download it, print it, and distribute it as you see fit, without any restrictions. The truth, when silenced, only survives if it is whispered from one to another, until it becomes a shout.

Keeping the flame of freedom alive has a cost, especially for those who are persecuted for defending it. If you wish to support the anonymous author and other projects dedicated to the defense of freedoms in our country, donations of any amount are a form of resistance.

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- Heimdall Fontes